

**Testimony Of
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Labor and Public Employees Committee
Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut
February 19, 2009**

Good Morning Representative Willis, Senator Handley, Representative Ryan, Senator Prague and other members of the Higher Education and Labor Committees. My name is Lauren Kaufman, Vice President of Education and Training Policy for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and Executive Director of the CBIA Education Foundation. Thank you very much for inviting me to speak today at your Joint Informational Forum on Workforce Development.

Training for Green Industries and Jobs

As our economy continues to move towards sustainable green industries, Connecticut will need to ensure that our workforce is equipped with the skills necessary to work effectively in this new environment. We see numerous growth opportunities in the state in advancing fuel cell development and manufacturing, in manufacturing component parts for wind turbines, and in the development and installation solar panels, to name a few areas. Alternative and renewable sources of energy, and energy efficiency, along with many of our traditional energy jobs will create opportunities for employment, although the pace of hiring has necessarily slowed considerably as we cope with the economic downturn.

I was asked to address how well the state is prepared to create high tech and green jobs. My first response to this is that the state will not create the jobs, the private sector must do that, but the state can ensure that we have a positive economic and regulatory climate that will incentivize companies to keep and/or grow jobs in this state. CBIA's members have testified on these issues many times, so I will not go over these now, but I will re-state that a positive business climate is critical for the investment in new technologies and the jobs that these industries can create. Connecticut has historically been a state of invention, innovation and manufacturing and these are key to bringing new entrepreneurs into the state and to growing high skill, high wage jobs in green industries, in aerospace and in bio-medical manufacturing, just to name a few key sectors of our economy.

Disturbingly, a recent New England Economic Partnership forecast is indicating that Connecticut will lose between 60-80,000 jobs between October,

2008 and June, 2010. In fact, we have already lost 29,300 jobs in 2008. So it is critical that the state do everything it can to help employers survive this economic downturn and keep and grow good jobs in the state. We have worked for many, many years to inform the legislature about the needs of manufacturers in the state and certainly over the last decade, no group of employers has been more vocal about their needs for a skilled workforce. While they may not be hiring at the same pace they were, they continue to tell us that their needs have not changed for individuals with strong core skills in math and science, good technical skills, a positive work ethic and with the ability to think critically and problem-solve.

The skills we need for green industries and green technologies are frankly much the same as those that are needed in advanced manufacturing. Whether you look at jobs in traditional energy companies or in alternative or in renewable energy companies, a pipeline of workers is needed from the technical high schools in electrical, HVAC and plumbing, for installers, insulation, heating and cooling technicians, or for lines people laying cable. In manufacturing, whether producing fuel cells or sanding and coating the housing for wind turbines, we need skilled workers, with strong math and science backgrounds. We need utility workers, technicians and engineers and frankly our educational institutions have not been providing a consistent pipeline of workers for either manufacturing or for the traditional and emerging energy industries in sufficient numbers to meet their demand.

The state needs to get serious about creating meaningful career pathway programs that lead young people from high school to community or 4 year colleges in technical fields where there are growth opportunities. Despite all the job loss Connecticut has seen in manufacturing, we still have many high skill, high wage jobs in advanced manufacturing that go unfilled because companies cannot find qualified applicants. Under the College of Technology's Regional Center for Next Generation Manufacturing, a unique product of the community college system, we have worked together to create awareness about manufacturing jobs in the state and on the development of new certificate programs in lean manufacturing and supply chain. The College of Technology is well placed to work with business and industry to identify faculty in the community colleges who can work on new green curriculum that will meet industry needs. With the ability to develop both non-credit and for credit courses, we believe that the COT is a model and resource that can be quickly expanded to cover green energy jobs.

For adults in need of retooling to access these jobs, the state needs to create certificate programs that are set by industry standards, to ensure that graduates of the programs come out with the skills required by industry. For example, the CAST test is given by every utility in the state as a basic screening device before one is allowed to even submit a resume. Yet until this year, most programs in the state do not require passing this exam as an outcome measure of their training

program. Similarly, we worked for years, along with many of our members, to bring the NIMS certification into the machining programs of the technical high schools, as it is a widely accepted national standard that tells any manufacturer what a young person knows and can demonstrate in his trade. Finally last year, the technical high schools adopted this standard for their manufacturing programs. Manufacturers throughout the state are thrilled and have quickly agreed to serve on work-based committees for the technical high school programs and to assess student machined projects in their plants. This type of collaboration is essential, if we are to ensure that graduates of our high school and college programs are prepared to meet industry standards on the job.

We strongly believe that one thing the state can do with regard to workforce development is ensure that every new educational and training program put in place, is designed around the industry requirements and standards of the jobs in the industry. This should be an absolute requirement and a no brainer, but it seems to seldom happen, or if it does, only after literally years of effort on the part of employers. We don't have years, but we do have immediate opportunities to work with employer groups and associations to ensure that any proposed training will meet industry specifications and prepare people for real jobs.

Additionally, the state could assist employers who want to re-position their factories for new opportunities. Just yesterday we received a request from a manufacturer in Manchester, ABA-PGT asking if we knew of any state or federal grants that could help them. They are currently planning and designing a "clean room" for medical injection molding and need to invest in new equipment to leading to job opportunities in plastic injection molding, from metal fabrication. They are looking for assistance to help with this needed investment in drug delivery and medical instrumentation. Whether it is helping automotive manufacturers retool for bio-medical manufacturing or green technologies companies that can come up with new ideas, invent new technologies or design new applications, the state could be a partner in this, which would lead to new, high skill, high wage jobs.

Connecticut has opportunities for job creation in development, manufacturing, sales and installation, upkeep and maintenance and through tax incentives, tax credits or other investments could use the federal stimulus funds to assist companies with strong business models develop or expand their businesses.

We don't currently have thousands of new jobs available in green energy companies, but together the public and private sectors can help accelerate the development of those jobs and prepare a skilled workforce to enter them as they come on line. In December, CBIA took the lead to develop an Energy Workforce Development Consortium at the request of Northeast Utilities and United Illuminating, who, as retirements increase over the coming years, have hundreds of new job opportunities opening up for utility workers, technicians and engineers. Also in the consortium are dozens of alternative energy companies,

the technical high schools, community colleges and engineering schools. In a recent survey of just 10 of the companies, they indicated that they employ 8, 615 people including 651 engineers, 661 technicians and 1, 741 in the skilled trades and project over 1,000 job openings over the next 5 years. While this is a small number to offset the job losses Connecticut is experiencing, it is very important that Connecticut help to meet the hiring demands of these companies, through effective education and training programs based on their industry needs and expertise.

We believe that the Energy Workforce Development Consortium provides a great opportunity to track the jobs and skill requirements of these and many other employers over the coming months and years and urge you to take advantage of this group as you develop your plans.

Thank you.